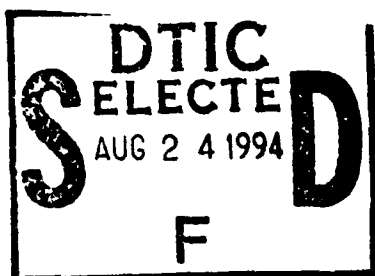


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THESIS

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
OF RACE AND GENDER:
BLACK WOMEN OFFICERS
IN THE U.S. NAVY

by

Kathleen B. Daniels

June, 1994

Thesis Co-Advisors: Gail Thomas/Frank Barrett

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by

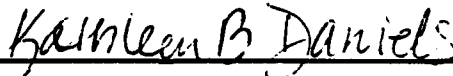
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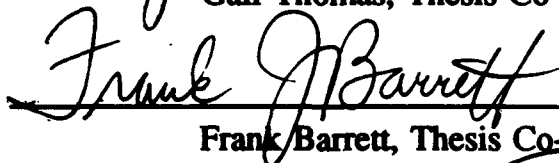


Kathleen B. Daniels

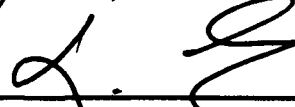
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact of life histories on the attitudes and experiences of Black women officers. In-depth, personal interviews with fifteen women officers, concentrating heavily on life histories, were the major source of data. Literature and studies concentrating on military Black women are few and limited in scope. This thesis attempts to unveil the importance of understanding the experiences of Black female officers.

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The interview protocol explanation establishes the methodology used to obtain six major themes from the analysis of data. The conclusion provides recommended actions to uncover and eliminate potential racial and gender bias that may exist in the military services.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The history of Black women in the military began long before both Blacks and women were officially accepted as part of the ranks. Both Blacks and women were called upon by the armed forces in times of war only to be cast out when a crisis subsided. Not until the Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 were women allowed to enlist in the regular armed services. At that time, they occupied 2 percent of military enlisted forces. Today the number of Black women serving in the military has increased from .54 percent in 1974 to 3.7 percent in 1989. Black women officers, in particular, comprise 13.2 percent of all active duty women officers in 1989, up from 3.3 percent in 1971 (Moore, 1991, p. 363). Despite this increase, very little attention has been given to the participation of Black women in the military.

The military experience differs for Black and White women for a number of reasons. Not only do Black women have to contend with a society that views her as being inferior because of her gender, but also with a society that refuses to recognize her as a human being because of her race. The military, a socially and politically masculine organization, has confronted the Black woman with both racism and sexism-- "the sum of which is greater than its parts" (Moore, p. 366).

This thesis is part of an on-going study conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School on issues surrounding gender as they relate to the Department of the Navy (DON). Unlike many studies conducted for the DON, this will provide a qualitative look at first-

hand experiences of Black women officers in the Navy. The intent of the thesis is not to provide an alternative to statistical data on such issues but to enhance what is known about the existing numbers.

The anticipated goal of this thesis is to provide a window for Defense policy makers that makes them aware of the interwoven issues of gender and race and their immeasurable effects on the Black women of the services.

The next chapter is dedicated to a literature review followed by a chapter presenting data collection methods. After the data collection methods comes an examination and analysis of the Black women's experiences and from that major themes are developed. The full analysis chapter forms the basis for the recommendations and conclusions given in the final chapter.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the concept of gender, the role of race and their influences on individual lives in society and the U.S. military.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and explain how the present social and military environment is maintained and sustained at its current hierarchy. This hierarchy is a bureaucratic ladder where men often remain at least one rung ahead of women. The influential role of race on women's experiences will be explored concentrating on Black women and their culture. In particular, how race has caused a schism in the women's movement, which has in turn colored the life instances of women in the military. To begin with, the ways in which gender is defined will be examined, followed by an examination of the gendering process and the reproduction of racism. Next a description of the forces shaping and pulling the Black woman in society will be discussed. Finally, there will be a look at the Black and White military woman and the theories suggesting the causes of the inequalities that exist in the military environment.

B. GENDER VERSUS SEX

The terms "gender" and "sex" are frequently used interchangeably even though the two words describe different sides of the same coin. Gender, according to Oakley (1972 p. 116), is a product of cultural influences whereas sex merely refers to the basic

physiological differences between men and women. Sometimes this is simplified so as to make male and female sex the basis for gender (Connell, 1987 p. 66). Gender is a patterned, socially produced, distinction between men and women, masculine and feminine. It becomes a product of social and professional interactions. The means by which "masculine" and "feminine" are reinforced or "practiced" lies in our social, cultural, economical, religious, political, familial, and military structures (Connell, 1987).

C. GENDERING PROCESSES AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACISM

As mentioned earlier, gender ideals are an integral part of an ongoing process. The structure of our lives and the daily practices or routines are intertwined. The structure promotes specific practices and the practices in turn support the structure (Connell, 1987). Neither one can exist without the other. According to Acker the term "gendered" processes "means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine (1990). The reinforcement occurs in every thought and activity during a lifetime. It is a process that is perpetually recreating itself.

Gender has become the divisional line in many aspects of our lives including the division of labor, physical space, and power (Burrell, 1980, p. 94). Today "female" is still associated more with the home and things domestic whereas male is linked to the career and financial support, things of the public arena. These lines could not exist without the culture to support and reinforce them.

Gendering also involves the creation of symbols and images to form a consciousness that justifies gender divisions. The media is guilty of this. But also organizations and the military in particular render themselves slaves to gendering. Successful officers are usually defined as "forceful", "decisive", and "rational"--qualities typically associated with images of masculinity. Unsuccessful officers are usually defined as "weak", "indecisive"--terms associated with femininity.

The interactions between men and women, women and women, men and men continue to reproduce gendered organizations. These encounters create alliances and exclusions and form dominant and subordinate relationships (Acker, 1992). The language, actions and attitudes between these different groups define the structure and atmosphere of the organization, be it military or civilian.

The gendering process continues through behaviors, dress, and attitudes. Each member of the organization fulfills his or her gendered role ensuring and perpetuating the gendered structure of work and opportunity (Acker, 1992).

Images of race and race-associated behaviors are, like gender, born and nurtured through society, its structure, and the men and women living in it. Race is similar to "sex" in that it is a biological characteristic inherent to men and women. In a comparative light, the ideas and reactions surrounding race are constructed through the language and actions of society's people. In this respect race attitudes, both negative and positive (though more the former than the latter), are perpetuated or reproduced by the members of society or the organization. For example, because the source of the military's personnel is society, it is therefore unrealistic to assume that the attitudes of certain

groups in society will be left on the military's doorstep. That is to say that as hard as the military or any organization tries to eliminate faulty racial attitudes, it cannot fully destroy these views. Generalizations centered on race are very contagious and this is part of the reproduction.

Most people feel the need to clearly define what a person is in order to know how to react toward that person. The military is a severely male-dominated, structured organization which trains its members to identify the unknown and react accordingly. People that make up the unknown in the military are all those that do not fall into the white male category. It is the unknown group that has labels adhered to them so that the dominating group can determine how to react to them. Compartmentalizing is a safe and, as they see it, easy way of handling life. However, human behavior and experiences cannot be defined in black or white, so any attempt to define a person based on gender and race is to create stringent limits. If the person does not fall exactly within those limits then conflict, misunderstandings, and false impressions arise. Hill and Jones explain that generalizations reduce differences between minority group members. This reduction in differences makes it easier for the dominant group to react to a minority (Hill and Jones, 1993).

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY AND CORE IDENTITY ELEMENTS

Gender uniformity minimizes the differences between people of a gender. This situation continues to exist in society and in particular in the military in spite of research providing evidence that the combined and interactive effects of race, ethnicity, class and

gender have a pervasive impact on the lives of women of color. The idea that theories developed on the experiences of white women are congruent with the experiences of women of color have yet to be justified--ethnocentric thinking (Bell and Nkomo, 1992). Bell and Nkomo discuss the idea of core identity elements to avoid the ethnocentric trap. These core identities may illuminate the current understanding of organizational women, the military's woman in particular. The four elements of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are interdependent and interactive rather than being hierarchical and static in nature. Taken together they form a gestalt: One element may become prominent while the others remain in the background. In Western civilization the four core identity elements have significant and far-reaching consequences in women's lives (Hill and Jones, 1993). Fox-Genovese (1991) argues that "race and gender should, in fact, enjoy privileged positions in our understanding of American culture for they lie at the core of any sense of self." (Bell and Nkomo, 1992, p. 240). The military has been guilty of gender uniformity for years. Military studies up to the present day have distinguished race as an ardent factor in the lives of men but has yet to see it as a factor in the diverse lives of women. Most published studies categorize men as either Black, Hispanic, Asian, and so on. Women are categorized as women. Whether this is the intent or not, all women are perceived as being white, and all blacks are perceived as being men (Hill and Jones, 1993).

The identity of a person is "located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his common culture." (Erickson 1968 p. 22). He goes on to describe identity as a process "by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him." (p. 22). Identity is the interaction between the

psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical (Erickson, 1968).

Race and gender identities manifested in organizations are a spill over from society. The military is a microcosm of society and so too draws from it.

The concept of race remains powerful, having acquired significant social and political ramifications. Members of the dominant white community have used the concept of race to create a hierarchy based on skin color. Ironically, so too have people of color developed a similar hierarchy.

Bell and Nkomo explain that a biography is the story of a person's life and in this case a woman's life. What a woman comes to understand about the world, her self-worth, her skill level, and the quality of life she comes to expect--all originate early in life. Women's stories provide insights on their motives, goals, and capacities as they move through life. Women are mothers, daughters, wives, friends and workers in the community in addition to being military officers. A holistic portrayal is critical for discovering the multifaceted roles, connections, and discontinuities inherent in their lives.

E. BLACK WOMEN WITHIN THE BLACK MOVEMENT

The Black protest movement of the late 1800's and early 1900's has been credited with giving rise to the United States women's movement. Within the larger movement was a group labeled the "abolitionist movement". This component of the Black movement was viewed as the white wing of the larger movement which encompassed it in significant ways. This movement drew both white men and women into the social protest against slavery. The participation of white women in this movement had profound

consequences for the emergence of the American women's movement. White women were brought into contact with powerful Black women activists whose very presence and widespread activism shattered the female "weaker sex" stereotype so prevalent in white middle-class America. The nonstereotypical role played by Black women alerted White women to another source of human oppression--male domination. The actions of the Black women demonstrated that there was no preordained social order for women. But there was another force within the abolitionist movement--white male domination and chauvinism--that revealed the exhausting nature of gender oppression. Ironically, white men insisted on dominating women even within a freedom movement focused on overthrowing human slavery (Hill and Jones, 1993).

In 1960 a similar process occurred. Up to this point the women's movement was in a dormant stage and many of the white women experienced their oppression in private. As in the nineteenth century, the civil rights and black movement opened the door for women to protest. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 after heated debates, protest, and rage. Howard Smith, a congressman from Virginia and an ardent segregationist used all his political power and know-how to defeat the bill. Title VII of the bill which focused on employment discrimination, initially stated that an employer could not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin. He thought that if he tacked the word "sex" onto it, the amended Title would definitely be shot down by the majority of his colleagues who would not vote for gender equality in the work place. The amended Title was favorably argued by a few congresswomen who knew the significance of such a bill. The bill passed and stuck a major victory for the Black Protest Movement

and for gender equality, giving ample fuel to ignite the modern women's movement (Hill and Jones, 1993).

The Women's Movement did not begin with women who had some vast political or historical knowledge, but with women who were responding to the everyday injustices that crossed their lives. Though these injustices were known to Black women and men, they were within White realities. Although hampered by their limited scope, the women's movement did bring to light questions that have and do effect all women, and men. The question of profound inequalities sustained by sexism in social institutions and ideology as well as economic and psychological relationships was echoed throughout the movement (Joseph and Lewis, 1981). Beale (1970) has argued that the inferior racial and sex status of Black women has placed them in a position of "double jeopardy"; that is, as a result of their visible minority status, Black women are subject to discrimination on two counts: racism and sexism. Much of the empirical literature relevant to the understanding of women is based on studies of White middle-class American women, many of whom are college educated. Relatively little is known about the experience and behavior of women representing the Black race.

F. BLACK MATRIARCHY

Black experience bears powerful witness that family, community and kinship networks are vital arenas of political survival and cultural resistance (Joseph and Lewis, 1981). The effects of racial and economic oppression figure largely in the structure and functioning of Black families. Black women play an integral role in the family and

frequently it is immaterial whether they are biological mothers, sisters, or members of an extended family. From the standpoint of many Black daughters they frequently "mother" their sisters, nieces, nephews, or cousins as well as their own children.

Most studies of Black women focus on her unique position of dominance within the family. Compared to White women, Black women are overrepresented as both heads of households and as participants in the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Census 1982). This may be attributed by the continual observation that Black families tend to educate their daughters more than their sons. Not to say that this was an expression of the parents' preference of daughters over sons but more likely a reaction to their greatest perceived threat to their daughters' safety--the prospect of sexual exploitation by White males in their homes where they served as domestics. Although this avenue for employment is not as frequently chosen as it was 20 years ago, the cloud of fear for their Black daughters well-being in society is still prevalent--and the main reason for attempting to give the female children economic freedom through education.

The Black Matriarchy phenomena is a self perpetuating cycle. Most Black women who head their households do so in both the domestic and financial arena. A study done by Blood and Wolfe (1980) shows that the lower class Black urban woman assumes more responsibility for making major family decisions than their White counterparts. This may be explained by the fact that because these women are frequently employed in domestic and service positions, they may have more experience in dealing with the White system. Even though the Black culture can be different world from the White culture and system, it still falls victim to the White culture's laws and limits. Therefore being familiar with

the workings of such a system would give these Black women an intellectual and social advantage over her Black male partners. This advantage continues to support the Black female in her dominant role in the household while providing the framework for future matriarchs.

G. ISSUES FACING THE BLACK FEMALE

Virginia O'Leary describes in her book Toward Understanding Women three big issues facing the Black female. Each issue embodies a gamut of sub-issues dealing with the everyday lives of these women.

1. Stereotypes and the Conceptions of the Black Female Role

The stereotypes of what is masculine and what is feminine are developed from and perpetuated in White society. The commonly held female stereotype of women being weak, dependent, passive, and submissive are not the same stereotypically feminine traits most valued in the Black culture. A "typical" Black woman possesses the traits of strength, independence, and resourcefulness (O'Leary, 1977). As mentioned earlier, often times the Black female finds herself at the center of the family in terms of financial and emotional support. She is faced with being the sole means of support for her family and therefore endeavors to compete in the economic struggle of the job market. She therefore adopts many traits characteristically defined as "masculine". For her, the White female stereotypes of docile, weak and dependent do not play into the reality of her everyday life.

Because the Black community is a microcosm of the larger encompassing White society, the Black woman may be viewed as less feminine (or more masculine) than her White female counterpart. "The very traits that ensure her survival and that of her family have made her the subject of Whites' scorn and ridicule." (O'Leary, p. 137). The Black female is constantly battling the schism that exists between the two cultures. She is caught between trying to "fit" and "conform" to a White society's view of how she should be while also endeavoring to maintain her identity and role in her own community.

As mentioned earlier, sex-role stereotypes are focused on the sex-role standards of White women and men. In 1970 a study by Steinmann and Fox was done to determine whether Black college women shared white women's misperception of men's ideal women. Their "Inventory of Feminine Values" found no real difference in Black and White self perceptions, but the Black and White women did differ in their perceptions of men's ideal woman. White women felt that the male's ideal woman had to be family oriented, while the Black female thought man's ideal woman had a balance between familial and self-achieving orientation.

A later study found that Blacks endorsed fewer items that discriminate between the sexes than did Whites. Even if Black men and women agreed on a trait being more characteristic to one sex than to the other, they were less likely than whites to devalue females on traditionally stereotypical grounds. The results are consistent with Hill's and Jones' suggestion that the Black woman's social role has been traditionally perceived as more valued in the Black community than that of the White female in the White community. The fact that Black men are generally supportive of working wives

probably stems from their perception of economic necessity than from their feminist ideology. And yet with this support, the many Black females hold a fear of success inside. Puryear and Medinick's 1975 study relates the fear of success to the Black Power Movement. Advocates of the Black Power Movement view female independence and assertiveness as detrimental to the survival of the Black Community. Young Black women who are increasingly being influenced by the Black Power Movement are confronted with the pressures of redefining their public roles along more traditionally (white) stereotypical lines (Hill and Jones, 1993).

2. The Black Feminine Identity

Discussed earlier, the conception of the female role endorsed by the Black community differs from that found in the broader White culture. If she accepts one stereotype over the other she cannot live up to the expectations of the other community. The Black female must therefore look for appropriate models to help her define her gender-role identity.

Grier and Cobb suggest that the Black woman rejects herself because she can not meet the White criteria of femininity. Blond hair, blue eyes and peaches and cream complexion are characteristics associated with the White feminine ideal and which are impossible for the Black woman to attain, not to mention close to impossible for many White women to attain. The influence of the White feminine ideal on the self image of Black girls is revealed by this comment by a Black Woman:

Because I was dark I was always being plastered with vaseline so I wouldn't look ashy. Whenever I had my picture taken they would pile a whitish powder on my face and make the lights so bright I always came out looking ghostly. My mother

stopped speaking to any number of people because they said I would have been pretty if I hadn't been so dark. Like nearly every little black girl, I had my share of dreams of waking up to find myself with long blond curls, blue eyes and skin like milk (Marshall, 1970, p.26).

The fact that Black men have traditionally viewed light-skinned women as more desirable has perpetuated the acceptance of the White feminine ideal within the Black community. And yet with the more recent resurgence of the Black Pride movement the opposite too is happening to women of this culture. To be the darker skinned woman is perceived as being more "Black" by those in the movement. That is the darker woman is understood to be more supportive, more attune, and more a part of the Black culture. Because of the shade of her skin she somehow possesses a greater understanding of what it means to be Black. These two differing views pull at the consciousness of many Black women (Hill and Jones, 1993).

Along with looking for a "white model", evidence has suggested that the Black female also continues to look within her community for the definition of the feminine role (Stack, 1974). The most prevalent conception of womanhood that existed among lower class urban preadult Black females was that of strength and resourcefulness. Their conception of femininity focused on the ability to accept responsibility and the traits they valued most highly in women were strength, resourcefulness, and self-reliance. Great admiration was expressed for their mothers and other Black models who they viewed as independent and self-reliant. Most of the studies focused on the lower class urban female. Her valued model incorporated characteristically "masculine" traits, whereas the conception of femininity among upper middle class Black families was closer

to the traditional stereotype of White society. No matter which model the young Black female endeavors to emulate she will no doubt be judged by the harsh and sometimes unforgiving White standards, not because they are superior but because the White male society remains in control today.

3. Self-Esteem

The idea that self-images are perceived and defined in terms of other's reactions to us is an important concept in understanding the emotional make up of most Black women (who live in a predominantly White world). Most people need the reassurance of others to feel comfortable about themselves and the choices they have made. The society in which Black females live has different standards than the community to which they belong. To constantly have her physical and cultural differences echoed by White society is not only painfully troubling but also inconsoling. According to Joseph and Lewis (1981), many Black men add to Black women's low self esteem because they have begun to accept the view that Black women are too independent and unwilling to submerge their own self-interests in order to promote the advancement of Black men.

Black women do derive a positive sense of self from many of the traditional aspects of the feminine role, although their social roles may be defined differently than those of the majority of white women. Studies have shown that Black women expect to and do work after marriage and children. For many this may reflect a current economic necessity. Economic independence has historically characterized the role of Black women- both during slavery and, and before then on the African continent (Billingsly

1971). There is also some evidence to suggest that Black women are more likely to value the role of mother over wife more than their White counterparts (Bell 1965). The mother-child bond is an important aspect of the structure of the Black community.

4. The Black Mother

The role of mother is central to the Black woman's definition of self (O'Leary 1977). In her role as a mother, nurturing and protecting her young, the Black woman has been the salvation of her family. As mentioned earlier, Black women function as heads of households more than do White women hypothesizing that because Black women are seen to possess both stereotypical feminine characteristics (for example warmth and expressiveness) and stereotypical masculine characteristics (for example strength and resourcefulness), they are better equipped than White women to cope with the demands of child rearing in the absence of a father. Gurin and Epps (1975) report that growing up in a home without a father did not adversely affect the academic performances, future aspirations, or achievement goals of Black college students. This may be a result of the dual nature of the role of the Black woman as mother and provider.

Within the Black community, and especially among the lower class family, there is an extended cluster of kin referred to by many as a kin network. This network allows Black women, who may not have the funds to pay for child care, to leave her children with extended family while she works to support her family. The evolution of the extended kin network has allowed these women to maximize their independence, acquire and maintain domestic authority, and strengthen ties with kin (O'Leary, 1977).

The social experience of Black women is undoubtedly different from White women. However, most of the differences between these two groups of women are probably not due to race per se, but rather to the political, social, and economic conditions in this society that have encouraged the existence of a separate Black community within a broader culture.

H. WOMEN, BLACK AND WHITE, IN MANAGEMENT AND THE MILITARY

Management organizations, including the military, are cultures separate from society but not separate from the influences and biases created by that society. As mentioned earlier, the racial and sexual bias created, maintained and sustained in our society influences each individual member. When these members choose to join any organization they naturally bring with them what was learned and lived in society. Civilian management organizations and the U.S. military are currently in need of an environment cleaned of sexual and racial bias. Military effectiveness is hindered by racial strife similar to that of the 1970's when racial tensions mounted and exploded on U.S. aircraft carriers.

Of the literature available on senior women and minorities (Black women in particular) in senior management and senior military positions very little is documented. Of that, most of what is known pertains only to White women or Black men. In their article, "Women and Minorities in Management", Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) discuss the current climate of women and people of color in management organizations. Interestingly enough, the hierarchical structure of the military in many ways mirrors that

of civilian organizations. The uncomplimentary attitudes toward women and minorities, born out of society, are nurtured and sustained in the systems that make up management organizations and the military.

1. The "Glass Ceiling" Effect

The glass ceiling is a concept popularized in the 1980's to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the hierarchy. Black women in particular hit the glass ceiling twice as hard. Their upward mobility in the military's hierarchy is stunted by their "double jeopardy" status mentioned earlier. The minority gender status of Black women coupled with their minority race status has the potential to severely blind the organization whose vision is already blurred by society's impeding views of Black women in positions of authority.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

Many theories have been offered to explain why there exists sexual and racial differences within the structure of many organizations. These theories as explained by Morrison and Von Glinow fall into three general groups. First are theories that assume that the differences of women and minorities are their handicap. That is, the argued deficiencies of, for example, Black women are largely responsible for their differential treatment. The second theory cites "discrimination by the majority population as the major cause of inequities." (Morrison and Von Glinow, p. 432). Here the bias and stereotyping of the White male in power is the basis for the slow progress of women and

minorities. The third theory pinpoints structural and systematic discrimination as the cause for any differential. In this case the policies and practices are guilty of perpetuating the discriminatory treatment of women and people of color. All three of these theories are submerged in the military, but they continue to resurface without warning.

a. The "Difference" Theory

Women's traits, behavior, attitudes, and socialization are said to make them inappropriate or deficient as leaders and managers because of their inherent fear of success, unwillingness to take risks, shyness, and overall unaggressive attitude (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1992). Because society defines a woman using some of these adjectives and many more, she is incapable of "doing the job". Fortunately current field studies have generally refuted this explanation.

The AT&T Assessment Center has data disputing both sex and race deficiencies (Hill and Jones, 1993). It showed that women and men were more similar than different concerning issues of personality and motivation, and that race differences appeared greater than sex differences. The "human capital" theory attempts to further explain differences in treatment and reward of women and minorities by suggesting that individuals are rewarded in their current position for their past investment in education and training. This explanation assumes that the investment for every individual pays off equally. Unfortunately, this is known not to be so. The education level of the White male officer is similar if not the same as the Black female officer, and yet in positions of authority, in positions of decision and in positions of leadership the Black woman

officer is heavily out numbered and overlooked (Rosenfeld, Thomas, Thomas, Thomas, Edwards, 1992).

b. The "Discrimination" Theory

This "Discrimination" theory views bias on the part of the dominant group (White men) as the basis for differential treatment of women and minorities. Morrison and Von Glinow explain an economic theory that states "the relevant stakeholders--employers, employees, customers, and so forth--have discriminatory tastes even when the women or minorities are perfect economic substitutes for White men in the workplace". Until very recently women have been excluded from doing specific jobs in the military because of the congressionally mandated nonparticipatory role in combat. Because of social ideology and stereotyping, women were not allowed to participate equally with men in defending their country. In a system designed by White men and originally exclusive to White men, women and minorities find themselves constantly fighting a way of thought more than a tangible enemy. Discrimination occurs in part because of the belief that women and minorities are less suited for positions of management and leadership than White men (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1988). Alderfer and Thomas (1986), claim that differential treatment of women and Blacks is not related to performance alone but to the presumption that deficiencies exist, even when none are found. These stereotypes are, as discussed earlier, based on historical roles. Ambiguity or lack of information on an individual contributes to bias against women and minorities because judgments are based on negative stereotypes of the group as a whole (Powell, 1988). These stereotypes are so strong that contrary data are sometimes ignored. Women

who are consistently performing on the same, if not higher, level of their male counterparts are seen as "out of the ordinary"; and phrases similar to "she does well for a girl" continue to make the rule the exception.

c. *The "Systemic Barriers" Theory*

This theory highlights structural discrimination. Alderfer and Thomas (1986) suggest two types of groups exists in organizations--identity groups (based on race, gender, age, or ethnicity) and organization groups (based on common tasks, work experience and position in the hierarchy). Tension results because the organization group membership changes but the identity group membership does not. For quite a time the military's organization group had the same membership as the identity group--that is, it was an exclusive White male organization. Today there are many identity groups that have infiltrated the organization group and as Thomas and Alderfer predicted, tension has resulted. Unsurprisingly, when group relations in an organization mirror society's patterns, as when Whites dominate high status positions and Black concentrate in low status positions, then the stereotypes of Blacks are distorted by prejudice while racists attitudes go unchallenged in the organization.

A structural problem for minorities in a White male-dominated organization is a concept labeled biculturalism. This concept describes the minority's struggle with fitting into two distinct cultural worlds (documented studies of Black Americans, Alderfer and Thomas, 1986). As mentioned earlier, Bell's 1988 research on the bicultural conflict of Black women shows that those from cultures other than the dominant group (White male) must handle the stress of moving physically, mentally, and

emotionally from one system to the other(Morrison and Von Glinow, 1990). The Black female officer, who holds a nontraditional role for a woman, let alone a Black woman, fights the racist and sexist systems of the military, the White society, and the male dominated Black system she goes home to. Barriers such as not being in the network and not being included in the knowledge derived from the social arena continue to shake the Black female officer's footing, making it appear as if she may stumble. The possible causes of lack of upward mobility for Black and White women in the military can be seen in all three theories. Differential treatment of any type of minority is abundant, both in society and the military. To challenge the biased attitudes and the biased system continues to be the greatest task. The generation of affirmative action and its quotas is here. Unfortunately, these attempts at "equalizing" the military may be the root cause of continued "racial and sexual hostility, lack of trust and a widespread presumption that women and minorities are less capable" (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1990, p. 346). This vicious cycle takes Black and White women around again to where they are seen as filling a position based on appearance and not performance.

The cycles of life and the structures and processes of society continue to provide the feeding ground from which racial and gender biases are nourished. Not until the cycles are broken or the structures reformed will society and all its sub-societies be able to eliminate such thought and behavior.

The next chapter describes the method of data collection and highlights the contributing importance of qualitative information in analyzing such data.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. OVERVIEW

This thesis is part of an extensive, ongoing study being conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School on gender issues in the United States Navy. Institutional bias and racial and gender discrimination in society and the military were examined through a comprehensive literature review. Sources included: video tape briefings, surveys, government reports, civilian academic papers, books, articles, and published data on applicable topics.

The main technique used in this study was in-depth, semi-structured interviews supplemented by extensive theoretical research and small-group discussions. This was qualitative research, which does not spring from numbers of the organization studied or the people interviewed. Rather it gains what authority it has from the depth of insight made available. Qualitative research is able to approach questions that are not answerable through quantitative means. It is better for seeing relationships, processes and contradictions. As in most research, this study begins analyzing existing theories that attempt to explain the relationships, processes, themes observed and ends by amplifying them with specific insight gained from the interview process. Its intent is to shed some light onto the process by which racial and sexual biases are formed and how they manifest themselves in a social and military setting.

The study began as a look into the social and military structures and the ways in which its female members are subject to gender bias. Initially both Black and White female officers were identified and interviewed, but as the thesis developed and past studies on gender bias (sampling over 50 women officers) were reviewed (Margosian and Vondryk, 1994), a clear divisional line surfaced between the Black woman officer and the White woman officer. This thesis therefore concentrated on the interviews of Black women only, using the few White female interviews conducted and the past extensive thesis study by Margosian and Vondryk to further highlight the schism. The sample consisted of 15 (10 Black and 5 White) female military officers ranging in rank from Lieutenant Junior Grade to Lieutenant Commander. The few White officer interviews were conducted not only for their valuable information but also to help me, a White female officer, build rapport with the interviewees before I ventured towards achieving the confidence of my Black female counterparts. Appendix B provides the exact breakdown of the interview sample.

B. INTERVIEWS

Fifteen interviews were conducted, each interview lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix A. All interviews were confidential and recorded for verbatim transcription. Confidentiality allowed for a more open discussion of the issues and provided a more realistic data base.

Interviewing is a craft, and in order to be a successful interviewer one has to be something more than a technician. Practice interviews, classroom observation, and reading

transcripts of other interviews made the interview process a more familiar one than if it had been tackled without review. Techniques discovered during practice interviews, such as casual conversations with the subject prior to the beginning of an interview, created an open atmosphere which brought out the best in each subject. People simply do not have an equal ability and willingness to verbalize their past and make vivid the details and meaning of their lives. And yet the best of interviewers is still subject to the subject's willingness or unwillingness to tell all.

C. DATA ANALYSIS AND THEME DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of the data was conducted in a manner to identify common recurring themes from the perspective of female Black officers, with respect to social practices that uphold or reinforce traditional notions of both race and sex. Techniques described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, provided guidance for data collection and theory development. The process of data collection is controlled by emerging theory, whether substantive or formal. As themes and related data emerged, their accumulating interrelations formed an integrated central framework. This core becomes the guide to the further collection and analysis of data. An iterative process between theoretical insights and data resulted in the formulation of numerous common themes.

Themes were first extracted from the data of each individual separately through in-depth analysis of all interviews. The themes were then compared and postulated into recurring themes and are presented in the following chapter.

IV. ANALYSIS

A. OVERVIEW

The Black community for many of these women officers interviewed, has a multitude of forces holding them back from moving up and out of the socio-economic raven in which they lie from birth. These forces range from skin color to gender to the Black men with whom they share their lives and work.

All the Black women interviewed held non-traditional jobs from two aspects. One, they are women in a male intensive organization--the military. And two, they are Black women working in a predominantly white military. This dynamic group entered an area of great unknown and are working hard to deal with the side effects of such a journey.

The analysis of the data in this study yielded six major themes. These themes are presented along with supporting justifications drawn from the interviews. Each justification is reinforced by quotations, excerpted from the interviews, describing specific incidents and the culture in which they occurred. The themes are presented chronologically from early patterns of socialization through experiences in the fleet.

B. THEME 1. MOTHERS OFTEN SERVE AS MENTORS FOR THEIR DAUGHTERS. IN PARTICULAR, THEY STRESS THAT THEIR DAUGHTERS NEED TO DEVELOP A SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE. FOLLOWING THIS, THEY STRESS EDUCATION AS THE "WAY OUT" OF THE LIMITATIONS OF THEIR UPRISING.

1. Theme

Mothers in the Black culture possess a position of authority and admiration in their family structure. Having experienced a lifetime of hardship and oppression, they realize the importance of independence and the role education plays in paving the road to a better life with fewer limitations.

2. Justification

Knowledge is power and in the Black community knowledge is a ticket out of less than desirable circumstances. The concept of Black matriarchy is a strong reality that describes the potent and influential role of the mother in her family. Not only is she many times the bread winner but she also fills the shoes of the disciplinarian, mentor, and protector of her children, her daughters in particular (O'Leary, 1977). The Black mother wants her daughters to have a better life than the one that exists for her so she is very specific in charting the course for her girls. One woman summarizes below important ideals stressed by her mother growing up:

Even though my mother never said so, I know she really wanted me and my sister to do better than she did. She was always saying, to the point of nagging, that we should rely on our own judgement, be more independent. I think she regretted doing things like not finishing her college education and getting married too early. But my sister and I thought she was great no matter what her education was--we didn't care. She was so proud when I graduated college and got commissioned, I think she felt as if she had achieved something also. Too bad my sister never ended up going to school. She still lives with my mother in St. Louis.(DA.9B)

Another example highlights the fact that the mother's support for education and independence is sometimes a battle fought alone. Fathers, and men in general, are at times the objects from which these women are seeking independence. A father's disinterest in his daughter's search for the foundations of independence may result from the fact that establishing independence for men was not an issue, merely a given.

I think I got a good sense of being responsible for my actions and just being accountable because I was a latch-key kid from like the third grade on. This is something my mother really instilled in me- be independent, do not expect anyone, especially a man, to hold your hand. My dad would always laugh when she would say that, I think he felt threatened somehow--like I wasn't going to need him anymore. He never finished college so when my mother, who did go to college, talked about how, to get anywhere, you need an education, he would just sit behind the newspaper and not say a word. I guess that was his stand (of silence) on the matter.(DA.13B)

Most of the interviewees grew up in innercity environments which posed distinctly different hurdles to overcome than the hurdles inherent in Black suburbia. And still the mothers of these women underscored the great liberating role of education and independence from the turmoils and limitations of their everyday existence. Because the "way out" lead their daughters straight to a male-dominated White society, they (their daughters) needed to be armed with a degree and a sense of self reliance. One woman explains how her mother would continually remind her that she, the mother wasn't going to be able to protect her once she left the house, and so the mother had to teach her how to handle life on her own:

I think if she mentioned this impending doom of the outside (our house) I would scream. She drove me crazy. Sue you have to do this to make it, and Sue don't ever forget the importance of school, because you know girl I won't be there to stop any of the injustices that may happen. Sometimes I think my mother had a flair for the dramatic, but when it all boils down she was right in teaching me to be on my own and not to quit on education. Look where I am now.(DA.12B)

Another Black woman officer gives an account of the hardship her mother had to endure to bring her family up in a "clean and safe" environment. She spoke of the incessant warnings her mother would give her regarding the purpose of her struggle and what it should accomplish for her, the daughter, and her siblings. For the Black woman officer these warnings served as constant reminder that her current middle class status was momentary and if she too desired such an existence for herself and any future family she needed to continually look for education and maintain the strength to do it on her own. She recalls:

My mom was very clear on the fact that even though we were her children, the world we had grown up in was courtesy of her hard work and determination and if this is what we wanted for ourselves we also had to work hard. She wasn't going to throw us out on our butts but she didn't want us to expect life to be easy. I think she felt that we wouldn't take anything for granted if we had to work hard for it. She got her bachelors degree when I was in seventh grade. I remember going to the graduation at Boston University, there were so many people there I couldn't even see here in the crowd of graduates. Anyway she made sure my sisters and I knew how important an education was. When we would drive through a bad section of town, you know where there are burns asleep on the street and families have all their possessions in a shopping basket, she would say that if she had given up and didn't demand more for herself and get her education we may have been one of those families. Pretty scary, huh?(DA.7B)

These accounts reflect the important role played by Black mothers in continually warning their daughters of the poverty and peril that awaits them if they did not develop the resolve to build a better life, specifically to gain independence through education.

C. THEME II: MOTHERS ENCOURAGE THEIR DAUGHTERS NOT TO GET MARRIED TOO EARLY IN THEIR LIVES FOR FEAR THAT THEIR DAUGHTERS WILL FIND THEMSELVES IN THE SAME LIMITED ROLES.

1. Theme

Most Black mothers view the marriage of their daughters too early in life as defeat, as an indication that their daughters will assume the same limited role as they themselves have done.

2. Justification

Marriage, according to many Black mothers, is the end of many possibilities for their daughters and the beginning of certain shortcomings. Because this was the course taken by most of their mothers, many Black female officers remember their warnings to forego marriage until they had obtained the tools necessary to survive in the outside the home--independence, education, and work experience. If their daughters ignore their heeds then the mothers fear seeing them taking on the same passive, subservient roles as they had done just a generation prior. One woman recalls:

My mother died when I was 17 but I remember her as the only one who wanted me to go to college...Actually her biggest issue was that she was afraid I would get married and start having babies like my older sister did. She kept telling me that if I didn't go for college before I got married it would never happen. I would never get the support from my husband because he would be too busy with work and would expect me to do wifely things like cook and clean. That's seems to be all my sister does. She was never interested in college so that's why I think she pushed me. When she died, my older brother made sure I did as my mom wanted.(DA.2B)

A General Unrestricted Line Officer remembers how her mother's dreams were extinguished when her mother married her father. And although her mother did not condemn her situation, she wanted to let her daughter know that life had more to offer than what existed in the confines of marriage, at least marriage too early:

My mother went to Prairie View and she didn't finish her last year there because she married my dad, who was enlisted at the time... I don't think she was sorry she married my dad but I know she is mad at herself for not finishing school...She never worked after that and told me once that women, once they get married they give up their dreams for their family. I know she didn't want me or my sisters to do that because when I brought my boyfriend home from college..... she pulled me aside and asked me to promise not to even think about marriage until I was out of school and on my own. (DA.12B)

One officer remembers her mother giving up her goals in order to make her father more comfortable in their relationship. She describes further how her mother warned her of the marital forces that stretch and mold her into a person she might not want to be. For this reason her mother recommends that her daughter live her life and become the person she wants to the fullest extent before she succumbs to marriage:

She has some college...I think my father is kind of threatened by someone who would be smarter than him. She kind of let that go by the way side...I didn't date very much in high school but when I was seeing this guy for about six months she told me to move on and not get too serious because it could ruin my life... See I had to be very careful in (our town) because everybody paired-off very quickly and permanently. My mother warned me that if I didn't get out and get my education I would be stuck here for a very long time. She knew that once I paired off with some guy and got married that was the end of any life outside of (our town)...She once told me that I had to develop my own person totally before getting married because men in marriage tend to squash women--they make them into who they want and not who they really are--kinda like my mom not finishing school because my dad didn't want her to be smarter than her.(DA.13B)

Marriage and children too early in a woman's life is not seen as helping the Black woman's existence improve. Further, men are seen as potential enemies--capable of hindering personal development. A Black female officer talks about how she saw marriage as a road block and tells how her parents' socio-economic position served as a model of what to avoid:

My parents felt you should go as far as you could go, get a good job and not have to work the long hours my father had to work... Most of my brothers and sisters got married. That's the difference with me and the rest of my family. I didn't believe in love, because my mother said I'd have plenty of time to wait for that, she was right. That's why I went on with my life and didn't get burdened down with children. I had

that need for freedom and independence and I didn't want to get stuck in (our town) like the rest of my family and friends. I was the only one who got out...I saw how my mother wasn't even like a person anymore, she just functioned on a very basic level--cooking and cleaning and taking care of my dad and us kids--no life other than that. (DA.3B)

Because of their own personal triumphs or defeats, mothers endeavor to make the road easier for their daughters. Marriage too early, seen as a road block, and in many cases more of a brick wall, was a route many mothers had taken and obviously regretted. Not to presume that they did not love their spouse or the children that came from that marriage but that they were no better off than when they were teenagers. This is the red flag the mothers are trying to wave in front of their daughters.

D. THEME III: BLACK WOMEN OFTEN FORMED EXTENDED FAMILIAL NETWORKS OF SUPPORT. MANY ENCOURAGE YOUNGER SIBLINGS TO GO TO COLLEGE, NOT TO MARRY EARLY, TO BE INDEPENDENT, JUST AS THEIR MOTHERS HAD ENCOURAGED THEM, ALL TO HELP MOVE THEM OUT OF THEIR LIMITED SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS.

1. Theme

Cycles occur in society and in different cultures. The mother's impeding influence is seen in the way their daughters reenact the mother-daughter relationship with siblings and try to shield them too from pitfalls in their culture and society.

2. Justification

Once the eyes of these young Black women are opened they fear the seriousness of their limitations and look to the younger siblings to quickly warn them before it is too late. The issues are the same and the potential outcome is just as damaging but the players are altered. One woman speaks of protecting her sister from entering the same vicious cycle she saw her

mother in but herself was lucky enough to escape:

My sister and my mother never really got along, in fact I can remember her saying that she would do whatever she could not to be like her. I was closer to my mom but also wanted different things out of life for me. She divorced my dad when I was ten and my sister was seven, and raised us basically alone...I ended up going to college and even filled out the applications and essays for my sister but she never went...She ended up marrying a guy who beat her,...but it took her over a year and me constantly yelling at her to leave him before she finally did... She lives almost on the other side of the U.S. from my mom but she still ended up in a similar situation. I spend alot of vacation time visiting her but now that I am getting married I guess I will have her fly out to see us instead. I still think of her as my little sister who needs to be protected from all the bad out there. (DA.8B)

Another officer recalls her first years in college. She insisted her sister follow her to school, trying to impress upon her the importance of an education and how it would help her in life. She carried the burden of her sister's education on her shoulders and when her sister quit it was devastating to this officer:

My first few years at Florida State were very hectic with NROTC and all, but it was nice having my sister there with me, even though she was going to the community college--she didn't get into Florida. Anyway I was so involved with my studies and my duties at the unit that I really wasn't much help to my sister. She never asked for it but I should have stayed after her to make sure she did well. She never finished college. I kind of blame myself, I should have been there for her more, but school was very busy for me...She moved back home and is working in a typing pool. She promised she was going to try to finish school but I don't know.(DA.4B)

A similar incident occurred with a different officer and her sister. Feeling a responsibility to be the one who helped her sister get an education, this Black woman quit school because she felt she needed to share the "chance" of an education, the "chance" to get out. Taking it as a personal defeat when her sister quit school, this officer became enraged at her sister and saddened by the outcome:

I had been going to college for a couple of years but because our family was so big it really wasn't right for me to soak up the money all for my education. I quit college

because it was time for my sister to go to college and my family couldn't afford to handle us both at school. I wanted her to have the same chance that I did. I was going to work and save some money and go on my own. When I found out that she was not going away I was furious with her. She wanted to stay at home and go to school at night. I knew that if she didn't get out of that house to go to school she would never finish. She ended up marrying a man about 15 years older than her--I knew it would happen.(DA.3B)

A Black woman officer recounts her battle to give her younger brother a better view of what Blacks could achieve than local fame down at the public basketball courts:

All my younger brother wanted to do was grab his basketball and hit the courts. Not that I'm opposed to sports or anything, but he was hanging around with low lifes, guys who were going nowhere and were bad mouthing those who did go places. I figured that if he continued hanging out with those losers he would be in jail or dead by the time he was 20. I was taking classes at the city college at the time and made him go to the library with me sometimes. He complained alot but I know he kind of liked getting to look at "college" books instead of his "high school" books--you know the subjects and pictures weren't as censored. To make a long story short, he ended up joining the Army and is now using his G.I.Bill to get his education--thank you very much.(DA.2B)

The strength that exists within these familial networks is powerful. Self sacrifice is common among those that have "gotten out" of their socio-economic position. They feel they somehow owe those left behind the knowledge from their experience. This knowledge is viewed as a key that can unlock the steel door to a chance for a better life. Interestingly enough, these women have taken on the "mothering" role and are re-teaching what they themselves have learned.

E. THEME IV: BLACK WOMEN OFTEN REPORT THAT THEY FELT PRESSURE FROM BLACK MEN TO SOCIALIZE WITHIN THE BLACK CULTURE AND TO REMAIN TRUE TO THE BLACK CAUSE.

1. Theme

The Black culture is very proud of its heritage and deals with the pressures and inequalities in White society by building strength within. Interracial dating, and in some extremes interracial socializing is seen as betrayal to the Black group. And while mixed dating

was seen as a knife in the Black man's back so was the unconcerned, independent woman who made her decisions devoid of his opinions or thoughts. For the "Black cause" is run and modeled by the Black man, and in his mind the pursuits of his cause cannot be reached if the Black woman is pursuing her own causes--independence, education, and a life in "non-traditional" terms.

2. Justification

Being non-supportive was a way of communicating the Black man's disappointment in the Black woman. Men would often attempt to manipulate the woman's choices and behavior by leaving them in romantic situations, using the prospect of lost love as a coercion. This was the means by which he tried to control her decisions and reroute her toward supporting his ideals and consequently the ideals of the Black cause. One woman remembers a boyfriend visiting her at Officer Candidate School and trying to get her to change her mind about joining the military:

I knew he came to visit me one last time as, I guess, his last ditch effort to make me change my mind about the Navy. We had been dating for over a year, and I know he wasn't thrilled about me going to Newport. When he came, he gave me a ring. But when I told him I still wanted to finish and get my commission he left, yeah, with the ring. I think he saw the Navy as interfering with our relationship... he admitted (later) that the ring was given to me more for me to change my mind and leave than it was because he loved me. He thought he knew what I wanted more than I did--what a joke.(DA.8B)

Another Black officer recalls a similar event in which her Black boyfriend insisted they get married right out of high school and when she told him she wanted to go to the Naval Academy first for her education, he wanted nothing to do with her:

When I was in my last couple of years in high school I was dating this guy who was a couple years ahead of me--he was at Virginia Tech. I think I really was falling in love, but when this Naval Academy thing came up he could just not believe I wanted to go into the Navy. He wanted me to marry him right out of high school. I remember he was

afraid..it was sort of weird, at one time he thought I was coming on too strong, trying to trap him or whatever. When I told him I was going off to the Naval Academy it sort of ended things. I visited him after my first year but he didn't want to have anything to do with me.(DA.13B)

Because the Black movement is in part a resurgence of individuals dedicated to ensuring equality in the White-male dominated society, Black women dating White or non-Black men is seen by the Black man as infiltration and "treason" committed by the Black female.

One Black female talks about an encounter with a Black male after he discovered she and some of her friends were spending time socializing with White men:

Maybe we are not typical Black women, I don't know what typical Black people are or whatever... We got stopped by one of our Black classmates at NAPS (Naval Academy Prep School) in this platoon bay area and he just read us the riot act. Who did we think we were...we (were to) only date Black guys... We didn't have time for the "goops", the Black guys that's what they called themselves... We just kind of muffed and said "screw you". If you're going to call me stuck-up, I'll be stuck-up. There's a saying if you don't act a certain way then you're not a true Black person. I was brought up to believe that you don't have to do that to be a Black, you just be yourself. If you want to listen to loud rap music, that's fine. You don't have to do it to prove that you're Black. They're not going to rip up your Black card.(DA.12B)

One Black female officer remembers being cast out of a Black Studies social group at the Naval Academy when she began dating a white midshipman:

...I just remembered him, the one my husband saved me from. He was a white guy at the Naval Academy. He was kind of a geek, but I liked him, I thought he was nice. We went out for 2 years. There was a Black Studies Club. I was ostracized and they did not speak to me. I would speak to people but because I was dating him, he was white, they just wouldn't stand for it. I can remember a couple of people that I would be (inches) close to and say, "hi" and they would just walk right by me. For two years. My husband filled me in on alot of that because he said yes, they just wrote you off as somebody trying to be white...just wanted to date white guys. They saw it as a betrayal. Class of 1986 Black cheerleader, she went through the same thing. I didn't confront anybody about it. You try not to acknowledge it and you pretend that's not what it is. I swear to God, to the minute, until I started dating my now husband (a Black man), then I was o.k. again.(DA.12B)

Because often the White man is seen as "the enemy" and "the oppressor", Black men feel betrayed in a sense when a Black woman chooses to be with a White man. Somehow she is selling out to the competition and defeating the Black movement to which she belongs. As demonstrated through these accounts, Black men work hard to make an issue of group (or individual) desertion--that is to say they feel that Black women asserting their independence, socializing with whomever they please, and in general disregarding their "feelings", does not help their struggle but hinder it.

F. THEME V: MANY BLACK WOMEN REPORT FEELINGS OF CONFUSION AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM IN REGARDS TO THEIR SKIN COLOR.

1. Theme

The female identity endorsed by the Black culture differs from that endorsed by the broader White culture. Because the Black women interviewed are unique in that they live and work in both cultures, they are torn between what is desirable in one community and what is desirable in another. Women report feelings of confusion and low self esteem as a result.

2. Justification

The Black woman, as with any woman, identifies with a "model" of who she feels she should be. This model may be intellectual, athletic, assertive, docile, light, dark, and so on. What tends to dictate the most acceptable model for that woman is society's view of the most acceptable version of a woman or the most acceptable version of "femininity". Here in lies the confusion for the Black female. The Black culture defines the feminine woman in a different light than the broader white culture. And because the Black female is associated with both

communities she is caught between definitions.

Skin color appears to be a major decision factor in the desirability of an individual in the Black community. Yet, there is sometimes a contradiction in regard to the hierarchy of skin color. Among themselves, Blacks often express pride in their Blackness. In this sense darker skin is seen as a source of pride. Yet some Black men express a preference for dating light skinned Black women because of possible influences from the dominating White culture. In either case the Black female is placed in a no-win situation. Her self esteem is greatly effected by this contradiction and she is caught questioning her worth in both societies.

As stated in a previous chapter, self images are perceived and defined in terms of others' reactions to us. The Black women interviewed all commented on others reactions to their appearance, particularly their speech and the shade of their skin. One officer remembers her enlisted training experience when she was eighteen and how she was approached about her looks and her speech:

I couldn't believe it was an issue. Absolutely. That's the first time I'd been told that I talked white. I thought, 'What are you talking about?' I guess because I didn't have the homeboy slang down, they felt I was less of a Black person. This was also the first time I was called yellow. This was by Black people not by whites. All by Black people--my peers actually. Yellow meaning I was a nigger slayer. That's a big deal in some populations. I tried not to let it bother me but it's hard when your own people are condemning what you look like.(DA.12B)

Another Black woman officer recalls confusion because of her skin color and the shades of her siblings. The subtleties of skin color here are significant enough to render aggression from others in the Black community as well as affection:

My brothers are very light skinned and they have from straight black to curly black hair. In my family prejudice was not preached. The only thing I can really remember my mother ever saying was that the people are men or women and their skin color is not an

issue. At school it was different. We had trouble because we were fair. My brothers are darker, but where I went it was difficult. I'm dark but my younger sister had a difficult time. She had an olive complexion. I had to make sure nobody would hurt her or followed her because of her skin color. She was my younger sister so I had to protect her. She would get teased about being an oreo on one hand and on the other she was asked out on dates more than I was--kind of ironic huh?(DA.3B)

One Black woman explains what it felt like to have her Black roommate at school judge her based on her comparatively dark skin:

I know she was always a little bit infatuated with herself, but it didn't bother me because we were just roommates, we really didn't hang out together but I did consider her a confidant. We would do our own thing on the weekends and then on Sunday night we would get back to our room and tell each other about our weekend. So one time she was blabbing about this outrageous frat party she went to...keep in mind this sister is very light skinned and usually dates only white guys unless there is a brother close to her skin tone. She came back that night and said, 'Girl, it's too bad you're so dark you could have a hell of a social life here!'. I asked her what she meant and she said that even though I was one of the nicest people she knew, it was a fact that Black and White men prefer lighter skinned women. I was so pissed I didn't know what to say. We were never close after that, she eventually moved out. I felt really worthless after she said that but deep down I knew she was wrong but that didn't erase the fact that many people feel that way. Now I've learned that people with her attitude aren't worth shit.(DA.7B)

A Hispanic female officer tells of her troubles growing up because of the shade of her skin--it was dark enough for people to think she was a Black woman:

I had to deal with comments from spic to nigger. People really didn't know what I was. My brother and sister eventually would make comments about it--you know how kids make jokes about being adopted. That made me feel really bad but because I had already established the fact that being Black was not good. That it was somehow inferior. Everything that was not positive in my life had something to do with the fact that I looked Black. It just shattered my self esteem.(DA.6H)

A Black female officer talks about how within the Black culture there is a proving ground and it begins with the first thing people see and judge a person by--skin color:

I am light, as you can see, and even today people immediately say oh is your mother white or is your father white. Well, my grandmother is Italian so I guess that constitutes white blood in my family. Anyway, it's like a joke that there are Black people whiter

than white people in Virginia. You see, somehow Black people think you are less if you are not as dark as they are-- I guess they think you are not a "purebred"--kind of funny huh. It's weird how depending on where you are or who you are talking to you could be better because you are light or you could be better because you are dark--keeps my head spinning. I don't let it get to me. My mother always said to just be the best person you can be--sex and color don't matter. But as soon as people (Black people) find out you might have non-black blood in you it is a source of contention.(DA.12B)

As evidenced by these recollections, Black women whether they want to be or not are caught in a maize of contradicting scales of self worth. Even within their own culture, thought to be a safe haven from prejudice, they find themselves being judged based on the way they look. A Hispanic woman officer recalls her feelings when her mother expressed her opinion about the color of someone's skin:

Because I felt as though I identified with Blacks more than whites whenever I dated a Black boy, my mother would have a fit. One time in particular, I brought home a Black boyfriend to my house and my mother was furious. She said I was starting to look like "them" and who did I think I was. But when I thought about it, the guy's skin was lighter than my skin. I mean if she thought he was worthless because he was Black, what did she think of me--I was darker than he was. That's when I realized that it's not what's on the inside that counts it's what people see on the outside.(DA.6H)

Escaping the ever reversing hierarchy seems to be an impossibility in both cultures. The women of color interviewed claim to have found stable ground for now but are well aware of the their changing environment. Because of this, many women never feel quite good enough. They will always fall short on one of the scales.

G. THEME VI: SOME WOMEN REPORT EXPERIENCES OF OPPRESSION THAT THEY ATTRIBUTE TO RACIAL PREJUDICE. THEY FEEL THAT WHEN THEY DO ACHIEVE SUCCESS AND RECOGNITION THEY ARE TARGETS OF RESENTMENT DUE TO THEIR RACE AND GENDER.

1. Theme

Some women experienced oppression in their military life that they attributed to racial prejudice. Many of these officers were targeted by their peers once they achieved success or recognition. Race and gender are reported to be the cause of this resentment.

2. Justification

Black women often feared that others begrudged their success. These women's hard work was lessened by those who accused them of receiving such accolades on the merits of their skin color and her gender alone. Many women of color are left feeling separated because of their race and gender as well as experiencing low self esteem. A Black female officer recalls her male classmates' reaction (at the Naval Academy) when she was awarded a leadership position in the company just after her company received a new Black male Company Officer:

My grades and my QPR were just as good as anybody else's and I was sort of near the top in our company. I was selected to be company sub-commander. All those guys that I hung out with and I thought that we were really close...we had gone through hard times and I listened to their stories when they came in at Saturday night at 2:00 in the morning, they were going to sit down and tell me everything that happened to them with their girlfriends, half-drunk and so-forth. They raised so much hell about that. It was, 'the only reason why you got picked was because you're black Jane'. They said it was because the company officer was black. I'm just as good as anybody else that's here. I felt betrayed by all those guys, I don't think I ever felt about them in the same way as I had before this incident.(DA.12B)

Another Naval Academy graduate told a story of her first days as a Black female midshipman. She was approached by two white male upperclass and asked what her intentions were--why was

she there. Because of her color and sex she was targeted. These two white men needed to know what possible reasons would a Black woman have for attending their Naval Academy. They tried to convince her that her presence was hurting the school and an unknown man who could have taken her Academy slot. This implied to her that she was undeserving and incapable of being a significant Naval officer--she was just a quota:

I remember they pulled out of formation and brought me to this dead-end hallway--I wasn't sure what was going to happen, all I knew was that I had screwed up somehow. Those guys asked me what I was there for, what did I want to do in the Navy. I told them I wasn't sure, I mean it was only my first year, but that I was leaning toward Supply Corps. They said you are suppose to be here (Naval Academy) to become a warrior and you're here taking the seat of some deserving guy who would really be a decent warrior...and you're just here to fill quota, and in your case Midshipman Smith you are filling two. I don't get it just because I was a Black female, I was not looked at as a woman who worked just as hard as they did to get in. As far as they were concerned I was only there to fill two congressional quotas.(DA.8B)

Black women often become the "double jeopardy" victims because of their sex and their race. It is noteworthy to highlight the hostility born out of these situations. The White male midshipmen were lashing out at her because they felt threatened by her double edged sword--race on one side and gender on the other. Unfortunately a Black female walking into this hyper-White male organization is targeted as the potential decline of masculine culture.

One Black officer spoke of an experience when she was enlisted. She recalls how she was treated differently by her peers when a white enlisted woman who reported for work in her department:

We got another girl assigned and there was a difference in the way she was treated. She was white and blond. Men love blonds. That's a reality. It was an obvious difference, she pretended to be helpless. I didn't do that. She would go up and ask to have the day off if she didn't feel like working. I wouldn't do that. We are all supposed to be working, but I wasn't going to impose my values on her life. It just made me mad when the outstanding work I would do was looked at as nothing special but when she filled out

a form correctly--wow, let's give her the day off. I don't know if it was racial or what, I was just hurt by their extra attentive attitude toward her and the "so what" attitude they had with me.(DA.3B)

Another officer remembers her peers' reactions when she was awarded the Naval Achievement Medal for her work in her command. Her disappointment was heartfelt when her contemporaries spared no congratulatory remarks and even went out of their way to let her know the award was not earned because of hard work but because of the color of her skin and her gender:

I had been working my butt off for six months--doing the job of three junior officers, because they were away and there wasn't going to be a replacement. I never complained and actually I think I thrived on the busy schedule--it made the days go by quicker. Anyway during quarters I was called up to be presented the Navy Achievement Medal and it was a surprise because I had no idea I was getting it. I was so happy and I know the Skipper was proud of me also. Well the next day I think I had at least three different officers in the command come up to me and say--"How did you do to get this award?" and then the kicker "It's too bad everyone else has to pull a miracle and you get this award because you are a Black woman--you know it's the end of the fiscal year and the Skipper just needed to fill his minority award quota." I was pissed at first and then I just felt like shit. How could these guys, who knew how hard I'd been working just put me down like that. It's an awful feeling.(DA.7B)

The military is an organization bursting with formality and tradition. Ceremonies are frequent and revered by all service men and women. Participating in these events is a way of paying homage to the organization, its history and a way of becoming part of a team. One Black woman officer remembers being excluded from a ceremonial event and tells of its effect on her:

The only thing that happened while I was there, Prince Andrew came on the island. This huge formal reception was set up. All the other female officers were invited to this reception for him except me, I was the only Black officer at my command. I don't know. I was talking with a Warrant about it. I said I would have loved to have gone. It wasn't because I was Ensign or JG because they invited some of the other Ensigns and JG's. I think it was because I was Black. Whenever I've gone overseas it's (the Black issue) always--especially in the British pubs. Absolutely. I've always said the Brits were worse than Americans. I'll take a red-neck any day. At least you know where you stand with them. If you give a red-neck long enough he'll respect you as an individual. I went and talked to my commanding officer about it. It was really hard for me to do. I said that

I feel like I've been snubbed and I'm not going to say I know why. He went and talked to somebody about it. I didn't expect him to go and talk to anybody about it but he said it seemed to have been oversight but don't let it bother you. I said that I appreciated him doing that. It was Prince Andrew, everybody got to get dressed up and got to go to the damn reception, why couldn't I go. It's like, 'damn, I'm a Naval Academy grad', you know...I can put on a dress half way decent, and I know how to handle myself. I have good table manners.(DA.12B)

The military, a subculture of society, falls victim to all the ills of society--prejudice (race and gender) being one of them. A Black female officer is twice afflicted because of her unique membership to two minorities. She therefore relies twice as much on the system to back her and perhaps shield her from any injustices. Unfortunately the system is constructed and maintained by individuals who are not always sensitive to those outside their ruling group--the White male officer population. Too often these dedicated women are an afterthought in the grand scheme of military life. One Black female officer tells a story about a racial encounter she had during Desert Storm while on liberty:

I was going to the only pub in Bahrain with a friend, another officer, White man. The bouncer said "You know you can't come in", pretty blunt, exactly. "We already have enough niggers in here.". I couldn't believe it. But he meant it. My white male friend got on him and said this is a naval officer your talking about. When he stood up for me I felt really, well, worthy I guess. After whisper/whisper then they let me in. There's another pub in Duboi and the same thing happened to a friend of mine there. I was pretty shocked that the ship didn't call this pub off limits. Sometimes when American servicemen are abroad and there is a place known to be "bad news" or dangerous the command will call it off limits. They do that alot when it comes to drug filled areas or areas high in prostitution--you know to avoid diseases for the guys. But this is a place that is obviously discriminating against Blacks was still ok to go. I heard a friend say that because it was the only pub around for miles they couldn't deny the other servicemen a place to drink and socialize. I really felt like I was dispensable to the Navy then.(DA.13B)

The issues of prejudice and resentment have relegated Black women to a secondary military and social status. However an increasing number of Black women are questioning the legitimacy of

this inferior setup. And although they report an atmosphere decreasing in instances where prejudice prevails, it is an issue that still requires concentrated attention.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

This study revealed that the two terms "gender" and "sex", often used interchangeably, are different in meaning, with gender being the product of cultural influences on an individual and sex referring to the physical characteristics an individual possesses at birth. Along the same lines, the issue of race and the social reactions which further pigeon hole an individual based on their physical make-up were highlighted and seen as part of an incessant process.

The production and reproduction of racism and gender are maintained by the structures and practices of society. Structure and practice are reinforcing processes, one cannot exist without the other. In other words, the structure breeds certain practices, certain behaviors, which in turn support the structure.

An individual's identity is limited by the generalizations of race and gender. In fact, identity is found to be the product of many elements, race and gender only two of them. This study, concentrating on Black women and their life experiences, found the issues of race and gender to be reflective of how society and their culture reacts to and perceives these women.

The Black community, rich in its history and values, is none the less a force pulling the lives of many Black women in different directions--as does the dominating White community. The strong, independent Black women have long been the supporting backbone of their culture and families, and yet they are continually pushed into passive, submissive roles to support the "cause" of the Black movement and the Black men who claim to run it.

The Black female military officer is unique in that not only does she penetrate a White dominated culture in her career choice, but she also intrudes in on a male intensive organization.

The shade of her skin, the tone in her voice, and the language she uses are all factors by which the Black female officer is critiqued and stereotyped. Because every aspect of her being is open for comment, her level of self esteem is perpetually in question.

This study of Black women officers' experiences prior to and in the Navy produced six major themes that unveil the social and economic influences on Black women, revealing how they see themselves, and ultimately, how they respond as adults to the treatment in the environment they have chosen--the U.S. military. The following section will present the conclusions drawn from these themes.

B. CONCLUSIONS

While the military is viewed as a natural career choice for men, a cultural dilemma results when women choose to make the military a career. The dilemma lies in the fact that the military is a white male dominated society--ironically paralleling its broader civilian social structure--now having its ranks invaded by the likes of women. And within the invasive minority of women lie another minority of Black women who are stretching the structure even further. The Black women officers interviewed gave detailed accounts of their lives prior to and while in the military, serving as fertile ground for this study.

Mothers of these women are seen as important role models and mentors to their daughters. In particular, they stressed their daughters need to develop a sense of independence. Along these same lines, mothers also stressed education as the "way out" of the limitations of their

upbringing. These strong beliefs were reinforced by the life examples of the mothers and by the every day communication in the household.

Flexing their influential muscles, mothers of these Black women officers encourage their daughters not to get married too early in their lives for fear that their daughters will find themselves in the same limited roles. Marriage is seen as a personal defeat or setback. Knowing all the forces that oppose the success of Black women, their mothers try to warn them of and hopefully eliminate as many as possible.

Black women often formed extended familial networks of support. Many encourage younger siblings to go to college, not to marry early, to be independent, just as their mothers had encouraged them all to help move out of their limited socio-economic class. History has a way of repeating itself and never has it been more visible than in the histories of families. The women interviewed worked hard to "get out" of their limited status and felt a responsibility toward some other family member to help them do the same.

Black women often report that they felt pressure from Black men to socialize within the Black culture and to remain true to the Black cause. The independent, self-reliant woman was seen as a threat because she were not supportive enough of the Black man, who claimed to organize and administrate the Black movement. This threat was also manifested in the woman's choice of companionship--the non-Black man or woman. The clear oppressor in the Black man's eye, the white man (and woman) were infiltrating their ranks by socializing (romantically and platonically) with "their" women. These views were continually and unmistakably communicated to Black women.

Shades of skin color are an issue. Many Black women report feelings of confusion and low self-esteem in regards to their skin color. Ironically this purely physical aspect, unrelated to self-worth or individual value, is used as a gauge in measuring desirability. Women of color are often confused by the ever changing hierarchy of skin shade. The Black culture, on one hand, may value a darker skin, while on the other hand, the White culture uses its influence in stressing the importance of a lighter skinned Black woman. Because the Black women interviewed were social and working members of both groups, they often were left confused by the conflicting standards. And because they may measure up to the standards of one, they inevitably fall short of the standards of another. Low self-esteem is the unfortunate result.

Experiences of oppression are reported by some to be caused by racial prejudice. They feel that when they do achieve success and recognition they are targets of resentment due to their race and gender. The military, no matter how hard it tries to erase the imperfections of society, remains infected by the ills of society. Racial prejudice is born of the ignorance that dwells in society's cultures. It is reproduced over and over again, so it is unfortunate, but no surprise, to see it continue in the military. Black women, minorities in society and in the military continue to be the victims of racial prejudice. The military rewards its members with leadership positions, jobs of greater responsibility, and with personal awards. Black women, having earned such rewards were faced by their coworkers with disdain for their hard work, implying the reason for recognition is based only on the fact that they were Black and female.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study produced recommendations based on the findings and conclusions. As seen in the analysis, most of the themes are generated during a time prior to entry into the military, so policy makers are therefore limited in the ways in which to alter and improve existing inequalities for these women as they exist in society. What can be done in the military is to recognize the environment that continues to exist for many Black women officers in society, and realize the profound effects it has on them and their experiences in the military. Based on this information, there are a number of recommendations given to better the understanding of and the environment for Black women officers in today's military:

1. Produce an environment through training and command support that will eliminate racial and sexual prejudice.

Black women have been reacting to and dealing with the injustices that exist in society for their entire lives. The military, because it is aware of these inequalities and because it has the equipment necessary to battle them, needs to fight this with serious intentions. Ensuring all its members are aware of these prejudices through training is a beginning. Lectures should be given on all levels, from divisional shops to command wide standowns. What is gained from this is everyday exposure, for some military members, to a new way of thought and action. Any form of prejudice is bred through cultures and the structures within those cultures. Proactive, as well as reactive training will aid in reforming the military culture into a model for society to emulate, instead of being a condensed version of society, ills and all.

2. Recognize that not all women bring the same experiences with them when they enter the service. Neither race nor gender should be a generalization about an individual's thoughts, actions, or reactions.

The Black women focused on in this thesis all came from differing backgrounds. And although common themes were generated from their interviews, it should be noted that just because an officer is a Black female, her race and gender should not be used to blanket her with all other Black women officers. The military would be shortchanging its officer corps by categorizing all women as behaving a particular way. Just as an individual's educational level influences his or her thought and life, so does culture, gender, and race color personalities and actions. Wiping out generalizations about race and gender would allow military members to interact and work on a level determined by professional accomplishments, not by labels.

3. Continue researching and interviewing Black women, officer and enlisted, so as to provide a growing understanding of the environment they live in prior to and after entering the military.

Because Black military women are unique in that they are the targets of both racial and sexual prejudice, it is necessary to understand their situation from their perspective in order to battle the ignorance of this behavior. So little has been written or studied about Black military women it is hard to locate historical, as well as contemporary information. Perhaps it is the lack of literature on and government studies about Black women officers and enlisted that perpetuates uneducated attitudes about these women. Their numbers are growing and the potential for change is great, but without a balanced understanding of the factors influencing these women, no progress can be made toward a full, successful integration.

4. Conduct research on organizations that have been successful in their integration of women of color and investigate the realities of duplicating such an environment in the military.

The military has the ability and manpower necessary to conduct the research needed to provide a base for such endeavors. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but merely look to where integration has been done successfully and transpose the framework to the military.

5. Conduct similar research in the area of Black enlisted women where the numbers are far greater and the potential for change a challenge.

The enlisted community handles its numbers of minorities and the prejudices associated with these groups in a far larger scale than that of the officer corps. Black enlisted women, though hard working and successful, may still deal with the problems and everyday prejudices indicative of the communities from which they came. As members of the enlisted corps, these women and men, although changing at an increasing rate, have limited educational experience--mostly high school diploma. This atmosphere may help breed ignorance when it comes to prejudice and bias. Research in this particular arena of the military would be not only beneficial to the troops, but educating to the military as a whole.

Employing the highest quality personnel possible is a must for the military now struggling to stay afloat during a large-scale drawdown. Women's issues in the Navy have reined as the leading headline for the past few years--their full integration into all areas of combat (except for submarines and special forces), the issues of sexual harassment, motherhood, and so on. But military women, for the most part, have appeared as a raceless conglomerate trekking their way to full acceptance in the workplace. Just as a person's sex influences their thoughts and how

people react to them, so does one's race. The military is no longer an organization built of middle class white male officers and lower class white male enlisted, who, because of their common background and experiences, have similar expectations and reactions. Today the military is as diverse and intricate as civilian society. To not recognize this diversity is an injustice to the service and to each member.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Tell me something about your family and growing up in your household.

Probe for stories about brothers, sisters, parents, division of labor between parents, family ideals and values.

Let's talk about junior high and high school.

Probe for stories about what kind of activities were they involved in. Who did they spend time with? What values drove their actions? How did they interact with boys--in school, sports, and socially? How did they interact with other girls?

How did you make your transition into the military?

Probe for stories about what motivated them to join the miliary. What was going on in their life at the time? What were their other options? Who supported their decision? Why? Who opposed it? What were their ambitions when they joined? How did they choose their community? What choices did they have? Why did they make those choices?

Let's talk about your training at Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), or Officer Candidate School (OCS), or the Naval Academy.

Probe for stories about what it was like being a woman during officer training. What about their studies? How did they relate to male peers, female peers, superiors? What kind of advice did they get from their superiors regarding their careers?

Can you tell me about each assignment you have had?

Probe for stories about what each billet was like. How many men, women, in what positions? What did she like about that command? What was her relationship with her peers, subordinates, superiors? Were they male or female? How was she treated? What made the experience good or bad? How did she feel? What impact did it have on her?

When in your career have you felt most successful?

Probe for stories about a time when she felt most alive. How did she feel? What are the adjectives and adverbs that she uses to describe the time?

Have you ever experienced a professional peer relationship with a man in the military?

Probe for stories about what it was like. How does she describe his emotions, the way he works, etc.?

What has your experience at Naval Postgraduate been like?

Probe for stories about the faculty, male students, and female students.

If you had five minutes with a panel of Admirals to recommend changes for better integration of women in the military, what would they be?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW CODES

| <u>CODE</u> | <u>DESIGNATOR</u> | <u>RACE</u> | <u>RANK</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| DA.1B | 1107 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.2B | 1100 | BLACK | LCDR |
| DA.3B | 1100 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.4B | 1100 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.6H | 1100 | HISPANIC | LT |
| DA.7B | 1100 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.8B | 1100 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.9B | 1110 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.12B | 3100 | BLACK | LT |
| DA.13B | 1100 | BLACK | LTJG |
| DA.1W | 1100 | WHITE | LT |
| DA.2W | 1100 | WHITE | LT |
| DA.3W | 3100 | WHITE | LCDR |
| DA.4F | 1100 | FILIPINO | LT |
| DA.5W | 1100 | WHITE | LT |

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